



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: MFWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, March 28– April 3, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

FWP announces the completion and availability of the Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management 2008 Annual Report. FWP's report, which is available online at fwp.mt.gov, shows Montana's wolf population increased about 18 percent in 2008, compared to a 34 percent increase in 2007. The minimum Montana wolf population is estimated at 497 wolves, in 84 verified packs, and 34 breeding pairs. FWP's report is part of the annual federal recovery update required by USFWS. The end of 2008 count also estimates that 302 wolves inhabited Wyoming and 846 wolves inhabited Idaho. Annual reports from Idaho, Wyoming, and information about wolves in Yellowstone National Park and the northern Rockies as a whole are available online at: <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

Nothing notable to report.

FWP encourages hunters, landowners, and other outdoor enthusiasts to report wolves through the online reporting button or to send in one of the pre-printed postcards available at all FWP offices, many US Forest Service offices, and license providers throughout the state. Information provided by the public helps FWP more accurately monitor wolf numbers and distribution in Montana.

Flights: None.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

Last week CSKT and MT WS removed 4 additional wolves from the Salish pack. Up to 3 wolves remain, efforts to remove the remainder of this pack are ongoing after chronic livestock depredations.

On 3/29, WS confirmed that the calf associated with the 10j shooting west of Wisdom (see below) was killed by a wolf. There has been recent wolf activity (tracks) reported in the area. At this point there is not a radio collar in this area. WS will attempt to place a collar if weather permits trapping.

On 3/30, WS killed a wolf south of Grant (SW MT) as previously authorized by FWP after a calf was confirmed killed on private land. Previous livestock losses on this same ranch were documented earlier in March. Efforts to collar a wolf are ongoing.

Outreach and Education Activities

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

A female wolf that dispersed from SW Montana last year, traveled through Wyoming, SE Idaho, NE Utah, N Colorado, and then back to south central Wyoming. She was recently located again in north central Colorado. Locations will be reported in the USFWS Weekly Report every 2 weeks and can be found on the USFWS website @ <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 3/29, a producer west of Wisdom reported first hazing a wolf into the brush away from cattle, and then upon returning shooting a wolf that was feeding on a dead calf amongst the cattle. The incident is under investigation.

Other

NEW -- Delisting Update:

The Final Rule to Establish a Gray Wolf – Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment and Remove it from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species becomes effective May 4, 2009. It was published in the *Federal Register* Vol 74, No. 62 pages 15123-15188 on April 2, 2009. The rule, the literature cited, and Questions and Answers about it are posted on the USFWS website at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>.

The rule delists wolves in Montana, Idaho, eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of northcentral Utah. Wolves in Wyoming will remain under the adequate regulatory mechanisms of the ESA. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to manage wolves in all of Wyoming under the provisions of the 1994 nonessential experimental population rules. Management under the ESA will continue until such time Wyoming develops a regulatory framework that USFWS Service determines meets the purposes of the ESA. After that happens the Service may initiate the mandatory federal regulatory process [including public review and comment] to turn management over to Wyoming.

Many environmental groups have already stated their intent to challenge the federal decision in court, by sending the required “60-day Notice of Intent to Sue” letter to Interior Secretary Salazar.

On May 4, Montana’s state laws and the FWP Commission rules and regulations take effect. See the FWP wolf web page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>. Check back often for updates and new information.

Current Management in Montana until Delisting Takes Effect:

FWP, through an interagency cooperative agreement, is still the lead agency for all wolf conservation and management (within the bounds of federal regulations) so long as adequate federal funding continues to be made available. FWP will continue to monitor wolves, do public outreach, and guide and direct research activities. No public hunting or trapping is allowed. USDA Wildlife Services is still the agency to investigate causes of injured or dead livestock and carry out FWP's decisions to address conflicts, as guided by federal regulations. Montana will continue to stay involved in litigation and any future delisting developments and will continue to seek the most efficient, successful path to delisting. FWP will also continue its collaborative work with Montana Tribes, other state and federal agencies, and the Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program.

Check the wolf pages on the FWP website for important information and updates:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

There were several openings on the Board that were filled when Governor Schweitzer made new appointments. The appointments are expected to be confirmed by the 2009 Montana Legislature. New appointees are: Brad Radtke (reappointed), Jim Cross (reappointed), Whitney Wankel (reappointed), Michael Leahy (new), and John Herman (new). The terms of Elaine Allestad and Larry Trexler are ongoing.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana / Columbus area at: 322-4303. Or call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.